

1181

CARACTACUS.

A

DRAMATIC POEM.

ALTER'D FOR THE

THEATRE ROYAL in COVENT-GARDEN.



C A R A C T A C U S.

A

D R A M A T I C P O E M.

Written on the Model of

The ANTIENT GREEK TRAGEDY.

First published in the Year 1759,

A N D

Now altered for Theatrical Representation;

By W. M A S O N, M. A.

NOS MUNERA PHOEBO
MISIMUS, ET LECTAS DRUIDUM DE GENTE CHOREAS,
MILTON.

Y O R K :

Printed by A. WARD; and sold by R. HORSFIELD and
J. DODSLEY, in London.

M DCC LXXVII.

[Price One Shilling and Six-Pence.]



TO THE RIGHT REVEREND THE BISHOP
OF LICHFIELD AND COVENTRY, PRE-
CEPTOR TO THEIR ROYAL HIGHNESSES
THE PRINCE OF WALES AND BISHOP
OF OSNABRUG.

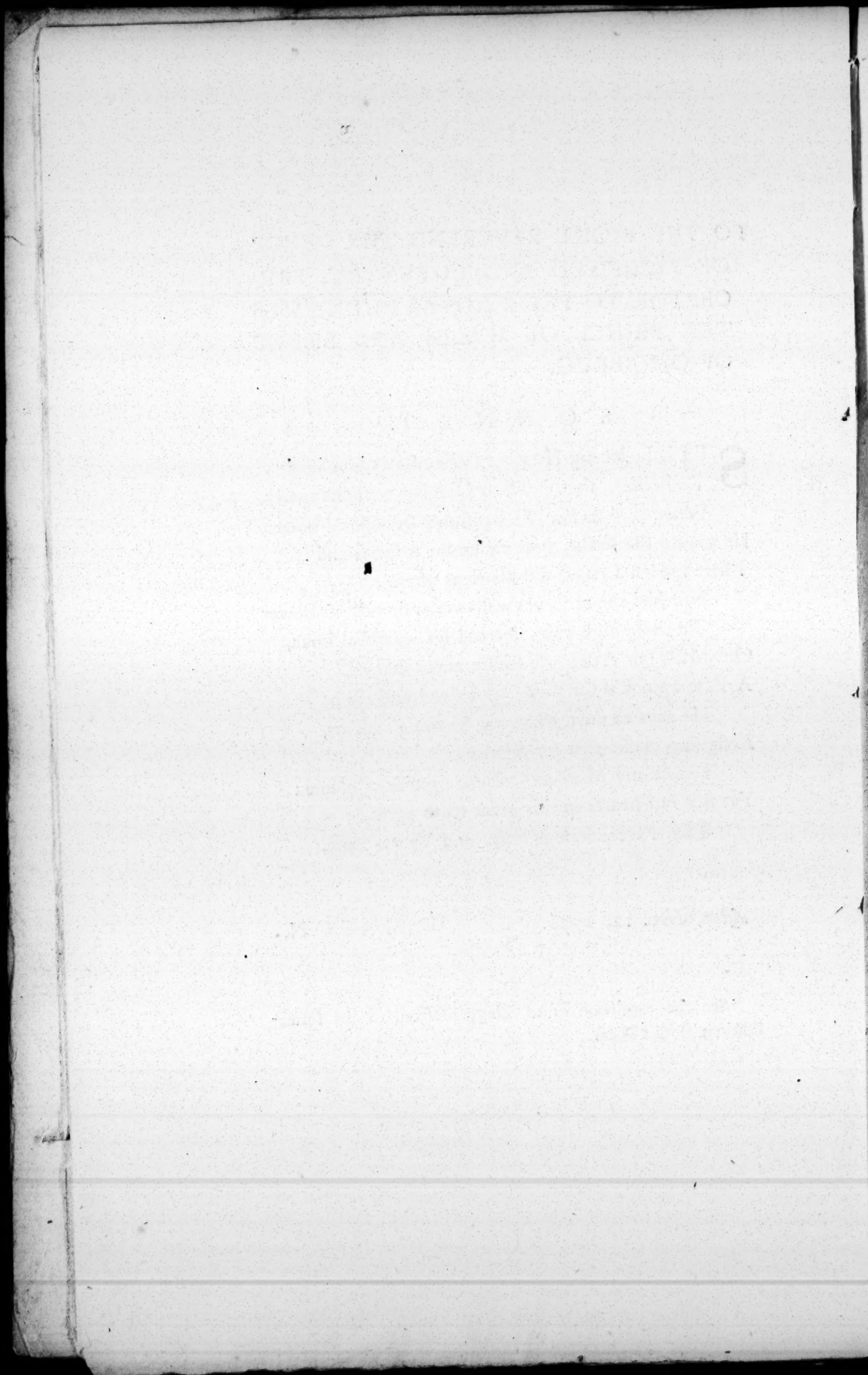
S O N N E T.

STILL let my HURD a smile of candour lend
To Scenes, that dar'd on Grecian pennons tower,
When*, "in low Thurcaston's sequester'd bower,"
He prais'd the strain, because he lov'd the friend :
There golden Leisure did his steps attend,
Nor had the rare, yet well-weigh'd, call of Power
To those high cares decreed his watchful hour,
On which fair ALBION's future hopes depend.
A Fate unlook'd for waits my Friend and me ;
He pays to duty what was learning's claim,
Resigning classic ease for dignity ;
I yield my Muse to Fashion's praise or blame :
Yet still our hearts in this great truth agree,
That Peace alone is bliss, and Virtue fame.

Aston, Nov. 12, 1776.

W. M A S O N.

* See the conclusion of an Elegy prefixed to the former Editions of this Poem.



LETTER to THOMAS HARRIS, Esq;

S I R,

YOUR very fair and candid behaviour towards me, in not only asking my permission to bring CARACTACUS upon the Stage, but in thinking me capable of making the Alterations in it, requisite for that purpose, is so flattering and unexpected an instance of condescension in the Manager of a Theatre, that it not only demands my best acknowledgments, but has induced me very readily to give up a few of my leisure hours to the attempt.

As I have endeavoured, in fitting it for the Stage, not to leave it totally unfit for the Closet, I suspect it may still be too long for representation. If, therefore, upon Rehearsal with the Music, you should find this to be the case, I will send you a second Copy, in which several other lines and passages shall be mark'd with inverted commas, which you may either omit, or retain, as shall then seem expedient. But, if I print the Tragedy, these passages will not be so marked, for the above reason.

If I wish for the success of my Poem, in this form, I assure you, Sir, it is chiefly on your account, that you may not suffer by the very great expence which you intend to be at in the exhibition.

Believe me to be, with very true regard,

S I R,

Your most obedient

Sept. 10, 1776.

and faithful Servant,

W. MASON.

PERSONS of the DRAMA.

Caractacus, King of the Silures	Mr. Clarke.
Aulus Didius, the Roman General	Mr. Whitfield.
Arviragus, Son to Caractacus —	Mr. Lewis.
Vellinus, } Sons to Cartismandua	Mr. Ward.
Elidurus, } Queen of the Brigantes.	Mr. Wroughton.
Evelina, Daughter to Caractacus —	Mrs. Hartley.

PERSONS of the CHORUS.

Modred, the chief Druid —	Mr. Aikin.
Mador *, the chief Bard —	Mr. Hull.
Second Bard — — —	Mr. Leoni.
Third Bard — — —	Mrs. Farrel.
Fourth Bard — — —	Mr. Reinold.

Scene, the consecrated Grove in the Island of Mona,
now Anglesea.

* Those parts only of the Odes which are printed in Italics,
are meant to be performed musically, the rest to be recited by
the chief Bard.

C A R A C T A C U S.

A C T I.

S C E N E I.

AULUS DIDIUS, *with Romans.*

THIS is the secret centre of the isle :
Here, Romans, pause, and let the eye of wonder
Gaze on the solemn scene ; behold yon oak
How stern he frowns, and with his broad brown arms
Chills the pale plain beneath him : mark yon altar,
The dark stream brawling round its rugged base,
These cliffs, these yawning caverns, this wide circus,
Skirted with unhewn stone : they awe my soul.
Surely, my friends, there is a hidden power
In the lone majesty of untam'd nature,
Controuling sober reason ; tell me else,
Why do these haunts of barb'rous superstition
O'ercome me thus ? I scorn them, yet they awe me.
Call forth the British Princes : in this gloom
I mean to school them to our enterprize.

S C E N E II.

AULUS DIDIUS, VELLINUS, ELIDURUS.

Ye pledges dear of CARTISMANDUA's faith,
Approach ! and to my uninstructed ear
Explain this scene of horror.

A

ELI-

ELIDURUS.

Daring Roman,
Know that thou stand'st on consecrated ground :
These mighty piles of magic-planted rock,
Thus rang'd in mystic order, mark the place
Where but at times of holiest festival
The Druid leads his train.

AULUS DIDDIUS.

Where dwells the seer ?

VELLINUS.

In yonder shaggy cave ; on which the moon
Now sheds a side-long gleam. His brotherhood
Possess the neighb'ring cliffs.

AULUS DIDDIUS.

Yet up the hill

Mine eye descries a distant range of caves,
Delv'd in the ridges of the craggy steep :
And this way still another.

ELIDURUS.

On the left

Reside the sage EUVATES : yonder grotts
Are tenanted by Bards, who nightly thence,
Rob'd in their flowing vests of innocent white,
Descend, with harps that glitter to the moon,
Hymning immortal strains. The spirits of air,
Of earth, of water, nay of heav'n itself,
Do listen to their lay. Now if thy eye
Be sated with the view, haste to thy ships ;
And ply thine oars ; for, if the Druids learn
This bold intrusion, thou wilt find it hard
To foil their fury.

AULUS DIDDIUS.

Prince, I did not moor

My light-arm'd shallops on this dangerous strand
To sooth a fruitless curiosity :
I come in quest of proud CARACTACUS ;

Who,

Who, when our veterans put his troops to flight,
Found refuge here.

ELIDURUS.

If here the Monarch rests,
Presumptuous Chief! thou might'st as well essay
To pluck him from yon stars: Beneath the soil
We tread, a hundred dark mysterious paths
Lead to as many caverns, in whose womb
He may for life lie hid.

AULUS DIDIUS.

We know the task
Most difficult: yet has thy royal mother
Furnish'd the means.

ELIDURUS.

My mother, say'st thou, Roman?

AULUS DIDIUS.

In proof of that firm faith she lends to Rome,
She gave you up her honour's hostages.

ELIDURUS.

She did: and we submit.

AULUS DIDIUS.

To Rome we bear you;
From your dear country bear you; from your joys,
Your loves, your friendships, all your souls hold precious.

ELIDURUS.

And dost thou taunt us, Roman, with our fate?

AULUS DIDIUS.

No, youth, by heav'n, I would avert that fate.
Wish ye for liberty?

VELLINUS, ELIDURUS.

More than for life.

AULUS DIDIUS.

And would do much to gain it?

VELLINUS.

Name the task.

A 2

AULUS

AULUS DIDIUS.

The task is easy. Haste ye to these Druids:
 Tell them ye come, commission'd by your Queen,
 To seek the great CARACTACUS; and call
 His valor to her aid. Her truce with Rome
 Is yet unknown: and this her royal signet
 Shall be your pledge of faith. The eager king
 Will gladly take the charge; and, he consenting,
 What else remains, but to the Menai's shore
 Ye lead his credulous step? there will we seize him:
 Bear him to Rome, the substitute for you,
 And give you back to freedom.

VELLINUS.

If the Druids—

AULUS DIDIUS.

If they, or he, prevent this artifice,
 Then force must take its way: then flaming brands,
 “And biting axes, wielded by our soldiers,”
 Must level these thick shades, and so unlodge
 The lurking savage.

ELIDURUS

Gods, shall Mona perish?

AULUS DIDIUS.

Princes, her ev'ry trunk shall on the ground
 Stretch its gigantic length; unless, ere dawn,
 Ye lure this untam'd lion to our toils.
 Go then, and prosper; I shall to the ships,
 And there expect his coming. Youths, remember,
 He must to Rome to grace great CÆSAR's triumph:
 CÆSAR and Fate demand him at your hand.

[*Exeunt Aulus Didius and Romans.*]

SCENE

[5]

S C E N E III.

ELIDURUS, VELLINUS.

ELIDURUS.

And will heav'n suffer it? Will the just gods,
That tread yon spangled pavement o'er our heads,
Look from their sky and yield him? Will these Druids,
Their sage vicegerents, not call down the thunder
In such a righteous cause? Yes, good old king,
Yes, last of Britons, thou art heav'n's own pledge;
And shalt be such till death.

VELLINUS.

What means my brother?

Dost thou refuse the charge?

ELIDURUS.

Dost thou accept it?

VELLINUS.

It gives us liberty.

ELIDURUS.

It makes us traitors.

Gods, would VELLINUS do a deed of baseness?

VELLINUS.

Will ELIDURUS scorn the proffer'd boon
Of freedom?

ELIDURUS.

Yes, when such its guilty price,

Brother, I spurn it.

VELLINUS.

Go then, foolish boy!

I'll do the deed myself.

ELIDURUS.

It shall not be:

I will proclaim the fraud.

VELLINUS.

Wilt thou? 'tis well.

Hie to yon cave; call loudly on the Druid;

And

And bid him drag to ignominious death
The partner of thy blood.

ELIDURUS.

O my VELLINUS!

Rend not my soul: by heav'n thou know'st I love thee,
As fervently as brother e'er lov'd brother:
And, loving thee, I thought I lov'd mine honour.
Ah! do not wake, dear Youth, in this true breast
So fierce a conflict.

VELLINUS.

Honour's voice commands

Thou should'st obey thy mother, and thy queen.
Honour and Holiness alike conspire
To bid thee save these consecrated groves
From Roman devastation.

ELIDURUS.

Horrid thought!

Hence let us haste, even to the furthest nook
Of this wide isle; nor view the sacrilege.

VELLINUS.

No, let us stay, and by our prosperous art
Prevent the sacrilege. Mark me, my brother;
More years and more experience have matur'd
My sober thought; I will convince thy youth,
That this our deed has ev'ry honest sanction
Cool reason may demand.

ELIDURUS.

To Rome with reason:

Try if 'twill bring her deluging ambition
Into the level course of right and justice.
But, pray thee, do not reason from my soul
Its inbred honesty: that holy flame,
Howe'er eclips'd by Rome's black influence
In vulgar minds, ought still to brighten ours.

VELLINUS.

Vain talker, leave me.

ELI-

ELIDURUS.

No, I will not leave thee :
 I must not, dare not, in these perilous shades.
 Think, if thy fraud should fail, these holy men;
 How will their justice rend thy trait'rous limbs ?
 If thou succeed'st, the fiercer pangs of conscience,
 How will they ever goad thy guilty soul ?
 Mercy, defend us ! see, the awful Druids
 Are issuing from their caves : hear'st thou yon signal ?
 Lo, on the instant all the mountain whitens
 With slow-descending Bards. Retire, retire ;
 This is the hour of sacrifice : to stay
 Is death.

VELLINUS.

I'll wait the closing of their rites
 In yonder vale : do thou, as likes thee best,
 Betray, or aid me.

ELIDURUS.

To betray thee, youth,
 That love forbids ; honour, alas ! to aid thee.

[*Exeunt.*]

S C E N E IV.

*The CHORUS, preceded by MODRED the chief
 Druid, descend to a solemn Symphony.*

MODRED.

Sleep and Silence reign around ;
 Not a night-breeze wakes to blow ;
 Circle, sons, this holy ground ;
 Circle close, in triple row.

CHORUS.

*Druid, at thy dread command,
 When thou wav'st thy potent wand,*

See,

*See, we pace this holy ground
With solemn footsteps soft and slow,
While Sleep and Silence reign around,
And not a night-breeze wakes to blow.*

M O D R E D.

'Tis well. And now, if mask'd in vapours drear;
Any malign or earth-born Spirit dare
To hover round this consecrated space,
Haste with light spells the murky foe to chace.

C H O R U S.

*We lift our boughs of vervain blue,
Dipt in cold September dew,
And dash the moisture, chaste and clear,
O'er the ground, and thro' the air.*

M O D R E D.

Now the place is purg'd and pure.—[*A short Symphony.*
Brethren! say, for this high hour,
Are the milk-white steers prepar'd?
Whose necks the rude yoke never scar'd,
To the furrow yet unbroke?
For such must bleed beneath yon oak.

C H O R U S.

*Druid, these, in order meet,
Are all prepar'd.*

M O D R E D.

But tell me yet,
CADWALL! did thy step profound
Dive into the cavern deep,
Twice twelve fathom under ground,
Where our sage fore-fathers sleep?
Thence with reverence hast thou born,
From the consecrated chest,
The golden sickle, scrip, and vest,
Whilom by old BELINUS worn?

Second

Second B A R D.

*Druid, these, in order meet,
Are all prepar'd.*

M O D R E D.

But tell me yet,
From the grot of charms and spells,
Where our matron sister dwells,
BRENNUS ! has thy holy hand
Safely brought the druid wand;
And the potent adder-stone,
Gender'd 'fore th' autumnal moon ?

Third B A R D.

*Druid, these, in order meet,
Are all prepar'd.*

M O D R E D.

Then all's compleat.

[Symphony repeated.]

And now let nine of the selected band
With wary circuit pace around the grove,
And guard each inlet ; watchful, lest the eye
Of busy curiosity profane
Pry on our rites : for know, CARACTACUS
This night demands admission to our train.
He, once our king, while ought his pow'r avail'd
To save his country from the rod of tyrants,
That duty past, does wisely now retire
To end his days in secrecy and peace ;
Druid with Druids, in this chief of groves,
Ev'n in the heart of Mona. See, he comes !
How awful is his port ! mark him, my friends !
He looks, as doth the tower, whose nodding walls,
After the conflict of heav'n's angry bolts,
Frown with a dignity unmark'd before,
Ev'n in its prime of strength. Health to the king !

B

SCENE

S C E N E V.

CARACTACUS, EVELINA, MODRED,
CHORUS.

C A R A C T A C U S.

This holy place, methinks, doth this night wear
More than its wonted gloom: Druid, these groves
Have caught the dismal colouring of my soul
In pity to their guest. Hail, hallow'd oaks!
Hail, British born! who, last of British race,
Hold your primæval rights by nature's charter;
Not at the nod of CÆSAR. Happy foresters,
Ye wave your bold heads in the liberal air;
Nor ask, for privilege, a prætor's edict.
Ye, with your tough and interwisted roots,
Grasp the firm rocks ye grew from; spreading proudly
Your leafy banners 'gainst the tyrannous north,
Who Roman-like assails you. Tell me, Druid,
Is it not better to be such as these,
Than be the thing I am?

M O D R E D.

To be the thing
Eternal wisdom wills, is ever best.

C A R A C T A C U S.

But I am lost to that predestin'd use
Eternal wisdom will'd, and fitly therefore
May wish a change of being. I was born
A king; and heav'n, who bad these warrior oaks
Lift their green shields against the fiery sun,
Meant that this arm should so protect my people
Against the pestilent glare of Rome's ambition.
I fail'd; and how I fail'd, thou know'st too well;
So does the babbling world: and therefore, Druid,
I would be any thing save what I am.

M O D R E D.

See, to thy wish, the holy rites prepar'd,

Which,

Which, if heav'n frown not, consecrate thee Druid :
 Meanwhile bethink thee, Prince, if ought on earth
 Still holds too firm an union with thy soul,
 Estranging it from peace.

C A R A C T A C U S.

I had a queen :

Bear with my weakness, Druid ! this tough breast
 Must heave a sigh, for she is unreveng'd.
 And then can I taste peace ? Ah ! EVELINA,
 Hang not thus weeping on the feeble arm
 That could not save thy mother.

E V E L I N A.

To hang thus

Softens the pang of grief ; and the sweet thought,
 That a fond father still supports his child,
 Sheds, on my pensive mind, such soothing balm,
 As doth the blessing of these pious fears,
 When most they wish our welfare. Would to heav'n
 A daughter's presence could as much avail
 To ease her father's woes, as his doth mine.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Ever most gentle ! come unto my bosom :
 Dear pattern of the precious prize I lost,
 Lost, so inglorious lost ; my friends, these eyes
 Did see her torn from my defenceless camp ;
 Whilst I, hemm'd round by squadrons, could not save her :
 My boy, still nearer to the darling pledge,
 Beheld her shrieking in the ruffian's arm ;
 Beheld and fled.

E V E L I N A.

Ah ! Sir, forbear to wound

My brother's fame ; he fled, but to recall
 His scatter'd forces to pursue and save her.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Daughter, he fled. Now, by yon gracious moon,
 That rising saw the deed, and instant hid

Her blushing face in twilight's dusky veil,
The flight was parricide.

EVELINA.

Indeed, indeed,
I know him valiant ; and not doubt he fell
'Mid slaughter'd thousands of the haughty foe,
Victim to filial love. ARVIRAGUS,
Thou had'st no sister near the bloody field,
Whose sorrowing search, led by yon orb of night,
Might find thy body ; wash with tears thy wounds ;
And wipe them with her hair.

MODRED.

Peace, virgin, peace:
Nor thou, sad Prince, reply : whate'er he is,
Be he a captive, fugitive, or corse,
He is what heav'n ordain'd : these holy groves
Permit no exclamation 'gainst heav'n's will
To violate their echoes. Patience, here,
Her meek hands folded on her modest breast,
In mute submission lifts th'adoring eye,
Ev'n to the storm that wrecks her.

EVELINA.

Holy Druid,
If ought my erring tongue has said pollutes
This sacred place, I from my soul abjure it.
And will these lips bar with eternal silence,
Rather than speak a word, or act a deed,
Unmeet for thy sage daughters ; blessing first
This hallow'd hour that takes me from the world,
And joins me to their sober sisterhood.

MODRED.

'Tis wisely said. See, Prince, this prudent maid,
Now, while the ruddy flame of sparkling youth
Glow on her beauteous cheek, can quit the world
Without a sigh, whilst thou——

CARAC-

C A R A C T A C U S.

Would save my queen
From a base ravisher; would wish to plunge
This falchion in his breast, and so avenge
Insulted royalty. O holy men!
Ye are the sons of piety and peace;
Ye never felt the sharp vindictive spur
That goads the injur'd warrior, else indeed
Ye much would pity me; would curse the fate
That coops me here inactive in your groves,
Robs me of hope, tells me this trusty steel
Must never cleave one Roman helm again;
Never avenge my queen, nor free my country.

M O D R E D.

'Tis heaven's high will——

C A R A C T A C U S.

I know it, reverend fathers!
'Tis heav'n's high will that these poor aged eyes
Shall never more behold that virtuous woman,
To whom my youth was constant; 'twas heav'n's will
To take her from me at that very hour,
When best her love might sooth me; that black hour,
[May memory ever raze it from her records]
When all my squadrons fled, and left their king
Old and defenceless: him, who nine whole years,
Had taught them how to conquer: yes, my friends,
For nine whole years against the sons of rapine
I led my veterans, oft to victory,
Never 'till then to shame. Bear with me, Druid,
I've done: begin the rites.

M O D R E D.

No. We postpone
Those rites, vain Prince! 'till Resignation meek,
'Till dove-ey'd Peace, hand-maid of Sanctity,
Approach this altar with thee. Bards, bear off
The victims. No reply. A frame of mind,

More

More fitted to these rites, must Patience bring
 To give them holy sanction. These instead,
 See I not gaunt Revenge, ensanguin'd Slaughter,
 And mad Ambition, clinging to thy soul,
 Eager to snatch thee back to their domain,
 Back to a vain and miserable world;
 Whose misery and vanity, tho' try'd,
 Thou still hold'st dearer than these solemn shades,
 Where Quiet reigns with Virtue? Try we yet
 That gradual aid which Holiness can lend,
 For much it can, by preparation meet
 Of sage mysterious office: "when the soul,
 Snatch'd by the pow'r of music from her cell
 Of fleshly thralldom, feels herself upborn
 On plumes of extasy, and boldly springs
 'Mid swelling harmonies and pealing hymns,
 Up to the porch of heav'n. Strike, then, ye Bards!
 Strike all your strings symphonious; wake a strain
 Which, as it echoes thro' yon vaulted cave,
 May penetrate, may purge, may purify,
 His yet unhallow'd bosom. To that cave,
 Monarch, retire, while hither we invoke
 The airy tribe that on yon mountain dwell,
 Ev'n on majestic Snowdon: they, who never
 Deign visit mortal men, save on some cause
 Of highest import, but, sublimely shrin'd
 On its hoar top in domes of crystalline ice,
 Hold converse with those spirits that possess
 The sky's pure sapphire, nearest heav'n itself.

[Exeunt Caractacus & Evelina.]

S C E N E

S C E N E VI.

M A D O R, C H O R U S.

O D E. [Symphony.

M A D O R.

Mona on Snowdon calls.

C H O R U S.

*Hear, thou King of mountains, hear ;
Hark, she speaks from all her strings ;
Hark, her loudest echo rings ;
King of mountains, bend thine ear.*

M A D O R.

Send thy spirits, send them soon,
Now, when Midnight and the Moon
Meet upon thy front of snow :
See, their gold and ebon rod,
Where the sober sisters nod,
And greet in whispers sage and slow.
Snowdon mark ! 'tis Magic's hour ;
Now the mutter'd spell hath pow'r ;
Pow'r to rend thy ribs of rock,
And burst thy base with thunder's shock :
But to thee no ruder spell
Shall Mona use, than those that dwell
In Music's secret cells, and lie
Steep'd in the stream of Harmony.

[Symphony.

A I R by the second B A R D.

*Snowdon, to thee no ruder spell
Shall Mona use, than those that dwell
In Music's secret cells, and lie
Steep'd in the stream of Harmony.*

M A D O R.

M A D O R.

Snowdon has heard the strain :
Hark, amid the wond'ring grove
Other harpings answer clear,
Other voices meet our ear,
Pinions flutter, shadows move.
Busy murmurs hum around,
Rustling vestments brush the ground ;
Round, and round, and round they go,
Thro' the twilight, thro' the shade;
Mount the oak's majestic head,
And gild the tufted mistletoe.

[Symphony.]

[Symphony.]

D U E T by the second and third B A R D S.

*Welcome, welcome, gentle Train,
Mona hails ye to her plain ;
Here, your genial dews dispense ;
Dews of Peace, and Innocence.
Banish hence each demon drear,
Fev'rish Rage, and chilling Fear,
Vengeance with his haggard eye,
Envy, Hate, and jealousy.*

M A D O R.

Mona ! thy grove is Virtue's throne ;
To Peace, to Piety alone
Thy central Oak its shade extends ;
Here, melting in Devotion's fires,
The Soul, sublim'd, to heav'n aspires,
Its dross subsides, its gold ascends.
Pure, as this glitt'ring race of light
That tend thy call from Snowdon's height ;
That here, arrang'd in order due,
Spread their bright robes of saffron hue ;
So pure, so bright, thy sons shall shine,
When life's delusive dream is o'er ;
Like them be crown'd with mistletoe divine,
Like them in azure fields of Ether soar.

Fuli

[17]

Full CHORUS.

*Mona! thy grove is Virtue's throne;
To Peace, to Piety alone
Thy central Oak its shade extends;
Here, melting in Devotion's fires,
The soul, sublim'd, to heav'n aspires,
Its dross subsides, its gold ascends.*

END of the FIRST ACT.

C

ACT

A C T II.

S C E N E I.

CARACTACUS, MODRED, CHORUS.

C A R A C T A C U S.

TRUST me, thou fire of Mona! All my soul
Is now prepar'd. I feel as should the man
Who, scorning what he was, who, what he is,
Lamenting, rests all future hope of peace
On what thy rites shall make him. Holy Druid,
Recall thy word; give signal for those rites.

M O D R E D.

The custom'd hour is past. It may not be.
What yet remains of night we dedicate
To pious musing. Be thy station, Prince,
Behind the altar; and, if sleep should deign
There to descend upon thy closed lids,
Haply her opiate poppies may supply
More than their wonted balm, and purge thy soul
From each remaining frailty. Many there,
Resting their heads, have had experience strange
Of influential sanctity convey'd
In dream or vision, whose protracted power,
Full long beyond that dream or vision's date,
Remain'd to bless their bosoms.—Whence that
noise?

Methought I heard the sound of steps profane.
Monarch, retire, the central Oak doth shake.

[Exit Caractacus.]

Enter a B A R D.

Father, as we did watch the eastern side,
We saw, and instant seiz'd two stranger youths,
Who in the bottom of a shadowy dell,

Held

Held earnest converse. Britons do they seem,
And of Brigantian race.

M O D R E D.

Haste, drag them hither.

S C E N E II.

VELLINUS, ELIDURUS, MODRED, CHORUS.

V E L L I N U S.

O spare, ye sage and venerable Druids,
Your countrymen and sons,

M O D R E D.

And are ye Britons ?

Unheard of profanation ! Rome herself
Would not have dar'd so rashly. Oh ! for words,
Big with the fiercest force of execration,
To blast the deed and doers.

E L I D U R U S.

Spare the curse,

Oh ! spare our youth !

M O D R E D.

Is it not now the hour,

The holy hour, when to the cloudless height
Of yon star'd concave climbs the full-orb'd moon,
And to this nether world in solemn stillness
Gives sign, that to the list'ning ear of Heav'n
Religion's voice should plead ? The very babe
Knows this, and, chance awak'd, his little hands
Lifts to the Gods, and on his innocent couch
Calls down a blessing. Learn ye, wretches, learn,
At such an hour to press this hallow'd plain
Is sacrilege.

V E L L I N U S.

Dread Seer ! were Mona's plain
More hallow'd still, hallow'd as is Heav'n's self,
The cause might plead our pardon.

C 2

E L I-

ELIDURUS.

Mighty Druid!

True, we have rashly dar'd, yet forc'd by duty,
Our sov'reign's mandate——

VELLINUS.

Elder by my birth,

Brother, I claim, in right of eldership,
To open our high embassy.

MODRED.

Speak then;

But see thy words answer in honest weight
To this proud prelude. Youth! they must be weighty,
T' atone for such a crime.

VELLINUS.

If then to give

New nerves to vanquish'd valour; if to save
A bleeding country from oppression's sword,
Be weighty business, know, that business ours,

MODRED.

Declare it then at once, briefly and boldly.

VELLINUS.

CARACTACUS is here.

MODRED.

Say'ft thou, proud boy?

Tis boldly said, and, grant 'twere truly said,
Think'ft thou he were not here from fraud or force
As safe as in a camp of conquerors?
Here, youth, he would be guarded by the Gods;
Each hair of his blest head would in these caverns
Sleep with the unsunn'd silver of the mine,
As precious and as safe; record the time,
When Mona e'er betray'd the hapless wretch,
That made her groves his refuge.

VELLINUS.

Holy Druid!

Can force, alas! dwell in our unarm'd hands?

Can

Can fraud in our young bosoms? Know, dread Seer,
We are the sons of her whose righteous sway
Blesses the bold Brigantes; men who firmly
Have three long moons withstood th' assailing pow'rs
Of fell OSTORIUS, that now falcon-like
Hang o'er our heads suspended. Such the state
Of us and Rome; in which our prudent mother
Sends us to seek the great CARACTACUS,
Calling his valour forth to lead her bands,
To fight the cause of Liberty and Britain,
And quell these ravagers.

[Caractacus starts from behind the altar.]

S C E N E III.

CARACTACUS, MODRED, VELLINUS,
ELIDURUS, CHORUS.

C A R A C T A C U S.

And ye have found me;
Friends, ye have found me: bring me to your Queen,
And the last purple drop in these old veins
Shall fall for her and Britain.

M O D R E D.

Rash, rash Prince!

V E L L I N U S.

Ye blest immortal powers! is this the man,
The more than man, who for nine bloody years
Withstood all Rome? He is; that warlike front,
Seam'd o'er with honest scars, proclaims he is:
Kneel, brother, kneel, while in his royal hand
We lodge the signet: this, in pledge of faith,
Great CARTISMANDUA sends, and with it tells thee
She has a nobler pledge than this behind;
Thy Queen——

C A R A C T A C U S.

GUIDERIA!

V E L-

VELLINUS.

Safely with our Mother.

CARACTACUS.

How, when, where rescu'd? mighty Gods, I thank ye,
For it is true, this signet speaks it true.
O tell me briefly.

VELLINUS.

In a fally, Prince,

Which, wanting abler chiefs, my gracious mother
Committed to my charge, our troops assail'd
One outwork of the camp; and there my hand
Was doom'd with other prisoners to release
The captive matron.

CARACTACUS.

Let me clasp thee, youth,
And thou shalt be my son: I had one, stranger,
Just of thy years; he look'd like thee right honest;
And yet he fail'd me. Were it not for him,
Who, as thou seest, ev'n at this hour of joy,
Draws tears down mine old cheek, I were as blest
As the great Gods. Oh, he has all disgrac'd
His high-born ancestry! But I'll forget him.
Haste, EVELINA, barb my knotty spear,
My bow, my target——

M O D R E D.

Rash CARACTACUS!

What hast thou done? What dost thou mean to do?

CARACTACUS.

To save my country.

M O D R E D.

To betray thyself.

That thou hast done; the rest thou canst not do,
If Heav'n forbids; and of its will thou reck's not.
Say, when these youths approach'd, did not the Oak,
That shades yon Altar, tremble? such an omen
Might bid thee doubt their truth.

CARAC-

C A R A C T A C U S.

By Heav'n, I feel,

Beyond all omens, that within my breast,
Which marshals me to conquest; something here
That snatches me beyond all mortal fears,
Lifts me to where upon her jasper throne
Sits flame-rob'd Victory, who calls me son,
And crowns me with a Palm, whose deathless green
Shall bloom when CÆSAR's fades.

M O D R E D.

Vain confidence!

C A R A C T A C U S.

Yet I submit in all——

M O D R E D.

'Tis meet thou should'st.

Thou art a King, a sov'reign o'er frail man;
I am a Druid, servant of the Gods;
Such service is above such sov'reignty,
As well thou know'st: if they should prompt these lips
To interdict the thing thou dar'st to do,
What would avail thy daring?

C A R A C T A C U S.

Holy man!

But thou wilt bless it; Heav'n will bid thee bless it;
Thou know'st that, when we fight to save our country,
We fight the cause of Heav'n. The man that falls,
Falls hallow'd; falls a victim for the Gods;
For them and for their altars.

M O D R E D.

Valiant Prince!

Think not we lightly rate our country's weal,
Or thee, our country's champion. Well we know
The glorious meed of those exalted souls,
Who flame like thee for freedom: mark me, Prince!
The time will come, when Destiny and Death,
Thron'd in a burning car, the thund'ring wheels

Arm'd

Arm'd with gigantic scythes of adamant,
Shall scour this field of life : and in the rear
The fiend Oblivion : kingdoms, empires, worlds
Melt in the general blaze : when, lo ! from high
Andraffe darting, catches from the wreck
The roll of Fame, claps her ascending plumes,
And stamps on orient stars each patriot name,
Round her eternal dome.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Speak ever thus,

And I will hear thee, 'till attention faint
In heedless extasy.

M O D R E D.

This tho' we know,

Let man beware with headlong zeal to rush
Where slaughter calls ; it is not courage, Prince !
No nor the pride and practis'd skill in arms,
That gains this meed : the warrior is no patriot,
Save when, obsequious to the will of Heav'n,
He draws the sword of vengeance.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Surely, Druid,

Such fair occasion speaks the will of Heav'n——

M O D R E D.

Monarch, perchance thou hast a fair occasion :
But, if thou hast, the Gods will soon declare it :
And this demands our search. Mortals, retire !
Leave ye the grove to us and Inspiration.

[*Exeunt Caractacus, Vellinus, &c.*]

S C E N E IV.

M O D R E D, C H O R U S.

M O D R E D.

My holy Brethren stay ; and you, ye Bards,
LEOLINE, CADWALL, HOEL, CANTABER,

Attend

Attend upon our slumbers : Wond'rous men,
 Ye, whose skill'd fingers know how best to lead
 Thro' all the maze of sound, the wayward step
 Of Harmony, guiding her varied course
 Thro' dissonance to concord, sweetest then
 Ev'n when expected harshest. MADOR, thou
 Full oft shalt interpose : Thy spirit sublime
 Can burst in unpremeditated strains
 Of Poesy, that scorn the warbling aid
 Of voice or harp. Thou hast the key, great Bard !
 That best can ope the portal of the soul ;
 Unlock it straight, and lead the pensive Pilgrim
 Through the vast regions of futurity.

O D E.

A I R.

Second B A R D.

*Hail ! thou harp of Phrygian frame !
 In years of yore that Camber bore
 From Troy's sepulchral flame ;
 With ancient BRUTE, to Britain's shore
 The mighty minstrel came :*

R E C I T A T I V E accompanied.

Fourth B A R D.

*Sublime upon thy burnish'd prow,
 He bad thy manly modes to flow ;*

A I R.

*Britain heard the descant bold,
 She flung her white arms o'er the sea ;
 Proud in her leafy bosom to enfold
 The freight of harmony.*

M A D O R.

Mute 'till then was ev'ry plain,
 Save where the flood o'er mountains rude
 Tumbled his tide amain :
 And Echo from th' impending wood
 Refounded the hoarse strain ;

D

While

While from the north the fullen gale
 With hollow whistlings shook the vale;
 Dismal notes, and answer'd soon
 By savage howl the heaths among,
 What time the wolf doth bay the trembling moon,
 And thin the bleating throng.
 Thou spok'st, imperial Lyre,
 The rough roar ceas'd, and airs from high
 Lapt the land in extasy:
 Fancy, the fairy with thee came;
 And Inspiration, bright-ey'd dame,
 Oft at thy call would leave her sapphire sky;
 And, if not vain the verse presumes,
 Ev'n now some chaste Divinity is near:
 For lo! the sound of distant plumes
 Pants thro' the pathless desert of the air.
 'Tis not the flight of her;
 'Tis Sleep, her dewy harbinger.

Second B A R D.

*Change my harp, Oh change thy measures;
 Gull, from thy mellifluous treasures,
 Notes that steal on even feet,
 Ever slow, yet never pausing,
 Mixt with many a warble sweet,
 In a ling'ring cadence closing.*

M A D O R.

Now the pleas'd pow'r sinks gently down the skies,
 And seals with hand of down the Druid's slumb'ring eyes.
 Thrice I pause, and thrice I sound [Symphony.
 The central string, and now I ring
 (By measur'd lore profound) [Symphony.
 A sevenfold chime, and sweep, and swing,
 Above, below, around,
 To mix thy music with the spheres,
 That warble to immortal ears.

[Symphony.

In-

Inspiration hears the call;
 She rises from her throne above,
 And, sudden as the glancing meteors fall,
 She comes, she fills the grove.
 High her port; her waving hand
 A pencil bears; the days, the years,
 Arise at her command,
 And each obedient colouring wears.
 Lo, where Time's pictur'd band
 In hues ethereal glide along;
 Oh mark the transitory throng;
 Now they dazzle, now they die,
 Instant they flit from light to shade,
 Mark the blue forms of faint futurity,
 Oh mark them ere they fade.
 Whence was that inward groan?
 Why bursts thro' closed lids the tear?
 Why uplifts the bristling hair
 Its white and venerable shade?
 Why down the consecrated head
 Courses in chilly drops the dew of fear?
 All is not well, the pale-ey'd moon
 Curtains her head in clouds, the stars retire,
 Save from the sultry south alone
 The swart star flings his pestilential fire;
 Ev'n Sleep herself will fly,
 If not recall'd by Harmony.

Third B A R D.

*Wake, my lyre! thy softest numbers,
 Such as nurse ecstatic slumbers,
 Sweet as tranquil Virtue feels
 When the toil of life is ending,
 While from the earth the spirit steals,
 And, on new-born plumes ascending,*

*Hastens to lave in the bright fount of day,
'Till Destiny prepare a shrine of purer clay.*

MODRED, *waking, speaks.*

It may not be. Avaunt terrific axe;
Why hangs thy bright edge glaring o'er the grove?
Oh for a giant's nerve to ward the stroke!
It bows, it falls.

Where am I? hush, my soul!
'Twas all a dream. Resume no more the strain:
The midnight air falls chilly on my breast;
And now I shiver, now a fev'rish glow
Scorches my vitals. Hark! some step approaches.

S C E N E V.

EVELINA, MODRED, CHORUS.

EVELINA.

Thus, with my wayward fears, to burst unbidden
On your dread synod, rousing, as ye seem,
From holy trance, appears a desperate deed,
Ev'n to the wretch who dares it.

MODRED.

Virgin! quickly

Pronounce the cause.

EVELINA.

Bear with a simple maid
Too prone to fear, perchance my fears are vain.

MODRED.

But yet declare them.

EVELINA.

I suspect me much
The faith of these Brigantes.

MODRED.

Say'st thou, Virgin?
Heed what thou say'st; Suspicion is a guest

That

'That in the breast of man, of wrathful man,
Too oft' his welcome finds; yet seldom sure
In that submissive calm that smooths the mind
Of maiden innocence.

E V E L I N A.

I know it well:

Yet must I still distrust the elder stranger:
For while he talks, (and much the flatterer talks)
His brother's silent carriage gives disproof
Of all his wordy boast. Oft too I saw
A sigh unbidden heave the younger's breast,
Half check'd as it was rais'd; sometimes, methought,
His gentle eye would cast a glance on me,
As if he pitied me; and then again
Would fasten on my father, gazing there
To veneration; then he'd sigh again,
Look on the ground, and hang his modest head
Most pensively.

M O D R E D.

This may demand, my brethren,
More serious search: Virgin! proceed.

E V E L I N A.

'Tis true,

My father, rapt in high heroic zeal,
Heeds not the diff'rent carriage of these brethren.
Yet sure 'tis strange, if, as the tale reports,
My mother sojourns with this distant Queen,
She should not send or to my fire, or me,
Some fond remembrance of her love? ah! none,
With tears I speak it, none, not her dear blessing
Has reach'd my longing ears.

M O D R E D.

The Gods, my brethren,
Inspire these scruples; oft to female softness,
Oft to the purity of virgin souls,
Doth Heav'n its voluntary light dispense,

When

When victims bleed in vain. They must be spies.
Hie thee, good CANTABER, and to our presence
Summon the young Brigantian.

EVELINA.

Do not that,
Or, if ye do, yet treat him nothing sternly :
The softest terms from such a tender breast
Will draw confession, and, if ye shall find
The treason ye suspect, forbear to curse him.
(Not that my weakness means to guide your wisdom)
Yet, as I think he would not wittingly
E'er do a deed of baseness, were it granted
That I might question him, my heart forebodes
It more could gain by gentleness and prayers,
Than will the fiercest threats.

M O D R E D.

Perchance it may :
And quickly shalt thou try. But see the King !
And with him both the youths.

EVELINA.

Alas ! my fears
Forewent my errand, else had I inform'd thee
That therefore did I come, and from my father
To gain admission. Mark the younger, Druid,
How sad he seems ; oft did he in the cave
So fold his arms——

M O D R E D.

We mark him much, and much
The elder's free and dreadful confidence.
Virgin, retire awhile in yonder vale,
Nor, 'till thy royal father quits the grove,
Resume thy station here. [Exit Evelina.

SCENE

S C E N E VI.

CARACTACUS, MODRED, VELLINUS, ELI-
DURUS, CHORUS.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Forgive me, Druid !

My eager soul no longer could sustain
The pangs of expectation ; the great cause,
I trust, absolves me : Fathers, it is yours ;
'Tis freedom's, 'tis the cause of Heav'n itself ;
And sure Heav'n owns it such.

M O D R E D.

C A R A C T A C U S,

All that by sage and sanctimonious rites
Might of the Gods be ask'd, we have essay'd ;
And yet, nor to our wish, nor to their wont,
Gave they benign assent.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Death to our hopes !

M O D R E D.

While yet we lay in sacred slumber tranc'd,
Sullen and sad to Fancy's frightened eye
Did shapes of dun and murky hue advance,
In train tumultuous ; starting we awoke,
Yet felt no waking calm ; still all was dark :
Suspicious tremors still——

V E L L I N U S.

Of what suspicious ?

Druid, our Queen——

M O D R E D.

Restrain thy wayward tongue,

Insolent youth ! in such licentious mood
To interrupt our speech ill suits thy years,
And worse our sanctity.

C A R A C-

C A R A C T A C U S.

'Tis his distress
Makes him forget, what else his reverent zeal
Would pay ye holily. Think what he feels,
Poor youth! who fears yon moon, before she wanes;
May see his country conquer'd; see his Mother,
The victor's slave, her royal blood debas'd,
Dragging her chains thro' the throng'd streets of Rome,
To grace oppression's triumph.

V E L L I N U S.

Monarch, yes,
If Heav'n restrains thy formidable sword,
Or to its stroke denies that just success
Which Heav'n alone can give, I fear me much
Our Queen, ourselves, nay Britain's self, must perish.

C A R A C T A C U S.

But is not this a fear makes Virtue vain?
Tears from yon ministring regents of the sky
Their right? Plucks from firm-handed Providence,
The golden reins of sublunary sway,
And gives them to blind Chance? Nay, frown not, Druids,
I do not think 'tis thus.

M O D R E D.

We trust thou do'st not.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Masters of Wisdom! No: my soul confides
In that all-healing and all-forming Power,
Who, on the radiant day when Time was born,
Cast his broad eye upon the wild of ocean,
And calm'd it with a glance: then, plunging deep
His mighty arm, pluck'd from its dark domain
This throne of Freedom, lifted it to light,
Girt it with silver cliffs, and call'd it Britain:
He did, and will preserve it.

MODRED.

M O D R E D.

Pious Prince !

In that all-healing and all-forming power
Still let thy soul confide ; but not in men,
No, not in these, ingenuous as they seem,
'Till they are try'd by that high test of faith
Our ancient laws ordain.

V E L L I N U S.

Illustrious Seer !

Methinks our Sov'reign's signet well might plead
Her envoy's faith. Thy pardon, mighty Druid,
Not for ourselves, but for our Queen we plead ;
Mistrusting us, ye wound her honour.

M O D R E D.

Peace ;

Our will admits no parley. Thither, Youths,
Turn your astonish'd eyes ; behold yon huge
And unhewn sphere of living adamant,
Which, pois'd by magic, rests its central weight
On yonder pointed rock : firm as it seems,
Such is its strange and virtuous property,
It moves obsequious to the gentlest touch
Of him, whose breast is pure ; but to a traitor,
Tho' ev'n a giant's prowess nerv'd his arm,
It stands as fixt as Snowdon. No reply ;
The Gods command that one of you must now
Approach and try it : in your snowy vests,
Ye Priests, involve the lots, and to the younger,
As is our wont, tender the choice of Fate.

E L I D U R U S.

Heav'ns ! is it fall'n on me ?

M O D R E D.

Young Prince, it is ;

Prepare thee for thy trial.

E L I D U R U S.

Gracious Gods !

E

Who

Who may look up to your tremendous thrones,
And say his breast is pure? All-searching Pow'rs,
Ye know already how and what I am;
And what ye mean to publish me in Mona,
To that I yield and tremble.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Rouse thee, Youth!

And, with that courage honest Truth supplies,
(For sure ye both are true) haste to the trial;
Behold I lead thee on.

M O D R E D.

Prince, we arrest

Thy hasty step: Know, e'er he meet that trial,
He must be plung'd into the dark drear womb
Of this deep cavern, which the yawning Earth,
Struck with our wand, now opens to thy view.
A thousand rugged steps of moss-grown rock
Lead to its horrible base. Low as that base,
Where never ray of chearing light yet shot,
The youth must now descend; there shall he sit,
With solitude and silence compass'd round,
Till our recalling clarion bids him climb
Again to our dread presence. Meanwhile there,
Ev'n in the centre of that perilous pit,
The solemn recollection of his deeds
Done, or design'd, shall pass in cold review
Before him; horror then shall shake his soul,
If, in the varied file, one deed be found
Alien to Truth and Virtue. *[Elidurus descends.]*

To thy charge,

CARACTACUS, his brother we consign.
Guard him in yonder cave. The trial past,
Again will we confer, touching that part
Which Heav'n's high will ordains thee to perform.

END of the SECOND ACT.

ACT

A C T III.

S C E N E I.

The curtain draws up, while a slow march is played.

MODRED, &c. *open the cavern in which ELIDURUS was confined: they lead him in procession round the altar, and from thence to the rocking stone: then the following Ode is performed by MADOR and the Bards.*

O D E.

R E C I T A T I V E *accompanied.*

Second B A R D.

THOU Spirit pure, that spread'st unseen
Thy pinions o'er this pand'rous sphere,
And, breathing thro' each rigid vein,
Fill'st with stupendous life the marble mass,
And bid'st it bow upon its base,
When sov'reign Truth is near;

Full C H O R U S.

*Spirit invisible! to thee
We swell the solemn harmony.*

A I R and C H O R U S.

Hear us, and aid:

*Thou that in Virtue's cause
O'er-rulest Nature's laws,
Oh hear, and aid with influence high
The sons of Peace and Piety.*

M A D O R.

First-born of that ethereal tribe
Call'd into birth ere time or place,
Whom wave nor wind can circumscribe,
Heirs of the liquid liberty of Light,
That float on rainbow pennons bright
Thro' all the wilds of space,
Yet thou alone of all thy kind
Can'st range the regions of the mind,

E 2

Thou

Thou only know'st
 That dark meandring maze,
 Where wayward Falsehood strays,
 And, seizing swift the lurking sprite,
 Forcest her forth to shame and light.
 Thou can'st enter the dark cell
 Where the vulture Conscience slumbers,
 And, unarm'd by charming spell,
 Or magic numbers,
 Can'st rouse her from her formidable sleep,
 And bid her dart her raging talons deep;
 Yet, ah! too seldom doth the furious fiend
 Thy bidding wait; vindictive, self-prepar'd,
 She knows her torturing time; too sure to rend
 The trembling heart, when Virtue quits her guard,
 Pause then, celestial guest!
 And, brooding on thine adamantine sphere,
 If fraud approach, Spirit, that fraud declare:
 To Conscience and to Mona leave the rest.

R E C I T A T I V E *accompanied,*

Fourth B A R D.

Pause then, celestial guest!
And, brooding on thine adamantine sphere,
If fraud approach, Spirit, that fraud declare:
To Conscience and to Mona leave the rest.

Full C H O R U S.

To Conscience and to Mona leave the rest.

M O D R E D.

Heard'st thou the awful invocation, Youth,
 Wrapt in those holy harpings?

E L I D U R U S.

Sage, I did;

And it came o'er my soul as doth the thunder,
 While distant yet, with an expected burst,
 It threatens the trembling ear. Now to the trial.

M O D R E D.

Ere that, bethink thee well what rig'rous doom

Attends

Attends thine act: if failing, certain death.
So certain, that in our absolving tongues
Rests not that power may save thee: thou must die.

S C E N E II.

EVELINA, ELIDURUS, MODRED, CHORUS.

EVELINA.

Die, say'st thou? Druid!

ELIDURUS.

EVELINA here!

Lead to the rock.

MODRED.

No, youth, awhile we spare thee;
And, in our stead, permit this royal maiden
To urge thee first with virgin gentleness.
Respect our clemency, and meet her questions
With answers prompt and true: so may'st thou 'scape
A sterner trial.

ELIDURUS.

Rather to the rock.—

EVELINA.

Dost thou disdain me, Prince? Lost as I am,
Methinks the daughter of CARACTACUS
Might merit milder treatment: I was born
To royal hopes and promise, nurs'd i' th' lap
Of soft Prosperity; alas the change!
I meant but to address a few brief words
To this young Prince, and he doth turn his eye,
And scorns to answer me.

ELIDURUS.

Scorn thee! sweet maid?

No; 'tis the fear——

EVELINA.

And can'st thou fear me, Youth?
Ev'n while I led a life of royalty,
I bore myself to all with meek deportment,

In nothing harsh, or cruel : and, howe'er
Misfortune works upon the minds of men,
(For some, they say, it turns to very stone)
Mine, I am sure, it softens. Wert thou guilty,
Yet I should pity thee ; nay, wert thou leagued
To load this suffering heart with more misfortunes,
Still should I pity thee ; nor e'er believe
Thou would'st, on free and voluntary choice,
Betray the innocent.

ELIDURUS.

Indeed I would not.

EVELINA.

No, gracious Youth, I do believe thou would'st not :
For on thy brow the liberal hand of Heav'n
Has portray'd Truth as visible and bold,
As were the pictur'd suns that deckt the brows
Of our brave ancestors. Say then, young Prince,
(For therefore have I wish'd to question thee)
Bring ye no token of a mother's fondness
To her expecting child ? A captive Queen
Has more than common claim for pity, Prince !
And ev'n the ills of venerable age
Were cause enough to move thy tender nature.
The tears o'ercharge thine eye. Alas, my fears !
Sickness or sore infirmity had seiz'd her
Before thou left'st the palace, else her lips
Had to thy care entrusted some kind message,
And blest her hapless daughter by thy tongue.
Would she were here !

ELIDURUS.

Would Heav'n she were !

EVELINA.

Ah, why ?

ELIDURUS.

Because you wish it.

EVE.

EVELINA.

Thanks, ingenuous Youth,
For this thy courtesy. Yet, if the Queen
Thy mother shines with such rare qualities,
As late thy brother boasted, she will calm
Her woes, and I shall clasp her aged knees
Again in peace and liberty.—Alas!
He speaks not; all my fears are just.

ELIDURUS.

What fears?

The Queen GUIDERIA is not dead.

EVELINA.

Not dead!

But is she in that happy state of freedom
Which we were taught to hope? Why sigh'st thou, Youth?
Thy years have yet been prosp'rous. Did thy father
E'er lose a kingdom? Did captivity
E'er seize thy shrieking mother? Thou can'st go
To yonder cave, and find thy brother safe:
He is not lost as mine is. Youth, thou sigh'st
Again; thou hast not sure such cause for sorrow;
But if thou hast, give me thy griefs, I pray thee;
I have a heart can softly sympathize,
And sympathy is soothing.

ELIDURUS.

O Gods! Gods!

She tears my soul. What shall I say?

EVELINA.

Perchance,

For all in this bad world must have their sorrows,
Thou too hast thine; and may'st, like me, be wretched.
Haply amid the woes these sons of blood
Bring on our groaning country, some chaste maid,
Whose tender soul was link'd by love to thine,
Might fall the trembling prey to Roman rage,
Ev'n at the golden hour when holy rites

Had

Had seal'd your virtuous vows. If it were so,
Indeed I pity her !

ELIDURUS.

Not that : not that.

Never till now did beauty's matchless beam——
But I am dumb.

EVELINA.

Why that dejected eye ?

And why this silence ? That some weighty grief
O'erhangs thy soul, thy ev'ry look proclaims.
Why then refuse it words ? The heart that bleeds
From any stroke of fate or human wrongs,
Loves to disclose itself, that list'ning Pity
May drop a healing tear upon the wound.
'Tis only, when with inbred horror smote
At some base act, or done, or to be done,
That the recoiling soul, with conscious dread,
Shrinks back into itself. But thou, good Youth——

ELIDURUS.

Cease, royal maid ! permit me to depart.—

EVELINA.

Yet hear me, stranger ! Truth and Secresy,
Tho' friends, are seldom necessary friends——

ELIDURUS.

I go to try my truth.—

EVELINA.

O ! go not hence

In wrath ; think not that I suspect thy virtue :
Yet ignorance may oft make virtue slide,
And if——

ELIDURUS.

In pity spare me.

EVELINA.

If thy brother——

Nay, start not, do not turn thine eye from mine ;
Speak, I conjure thee, is his purpose honest ?

I know the guilty price that barb'rous Rome
Sets on my Father's head ; and gold, vile gold,
Has now a charm for Britons :—Yes, thou shudder'st
At the dire thought ; yet not as if 'twere strange,
But as our fears were mutual. Ah ! young stranger,
That open face scarce needs a tongue to utter
What works within. Come then, ingenuous Prince,
And instant make discovery to the Druid,
While yet 'tis not too late.

ELIDURUS.

Ah ! what discover ?

Say, whom must I betray ?

EVELINA.

Thy brother.

ELIDURUS.

Ha !

EVELINA.

Who is no brother, if his guilty soul
Teems with such perfidy. O all ye stars !
Can he be brother to a youth like thee,
Who would betray an old and honour'd King,
That King his countryman, the pride of Britain ?
Can he be brother to a youth like thee,
Who from a young, defenceless, innocent maid,
Would take that King her father ? Make her suffer
All that an orphan suffers ? More perchance :
The ruffian foe.—O tears, ye choak my utterance !
It cannot be—and yet thou still art silent.
Turn, Youth, and see me weep : ah, see me kneel.
I am of royal blood, not wont to kneel,
Yet will I kneel to thee. Oh save my father !
Save a distressful maiden from the force
Of barbarous men ! Be thou a brother to me,
For mine, alas !—Ha !

[Sees Arviragus entering.]

F

SCENE

S C E N E III.

ARVIRAGUS, EVELINA, ELIDURUS,
MODRED, CHORUS.

ARVIRAGUS.

EVELINA, rise!

Know, maid, I ne'er will tamely see thee kneel,
Ev'n at the foot of CÆSAR.

EVELINA.

'Tis himself:

And he will prove my father's fears were false;
False, as his son is brave. Thou best of brothers,
Come to my arms. Where hast thou been, thou wanderer?
How wert thou sav'd? Indeed, ARVIRAGUS,
I never shed such tears, since thou wert lost,
For these are tears of rapture.

ARVIRAGUS.

EVELINA!

Fain wou'd I greet thee as a brother ought:
But wherefore did'st thou kneel?

EVELINA.

Oh! ask not now.

ARVIRAGUS.

By heav'n I must; and he must answer me,
Whoe'er he be. What art thou, sullen stranger?

ELIDURUS.

A Briton.

ARVIRAGUS.

Brief and bold.

EVELINA.

Ah, spare the taunt:

He merits not thy wrath. Behold the Druids:
Lo! they advance. With holy reverence first
Thou must address their sanctity.

ARVI-

A R V I R A G U S.

I will.

But see, proud Boy, thou do'st not quit the grove
'Till time allows us parley.

E L I D U R U S.

Prince, I mean not.

[Elidurus retires among the Chorus.]

A R V I R A G U S.

Sages, and sons of heav'n! Illustrious Druids!
Abruptly I approach your sacred presence:
Yet such dire tidings——

M O D R E D.

On thy peril, peace!

Thou stand'st accus'd, and by a father's voice,
Of crimes abhorr'd, of cowardice and flight;
And therefore may'st not in these sacred groves
Utter polluted accents. Quickly say,
Wherefore thou fled'st? For, that base fact unclear'd,
We hold no further converse.

A R V I R A G U S.

Oh ye Gods!

Am I the son of your CARACTACUS?
And could I fly?

M O D R E D.

Waste not or time or words,

But tell us why thou fled'st.

A R V I R A G U S.

I fled not, Druid!

By the great Gods I fled not! save to stop
Our dastard troops, and rally them; when lo!
A random shaft did level me with earth,
Where, pale and senseless as the slain around me,
I lay till midnight; when a pitying hind
Found me, and succour'd me. My strength repair'd,
Need I repeat the arts I us'd to screen me?
How now a peasant, from a beggarly scrip

I fold cheap food to slaves that nam'd the price,
Nor after gave it. Now a minstrel poor,
With ill-tun'd harp, I ply'd a thriftless trade,
And by such shifts did win obscurity
To shroud my name. At length to other conquests
OSTORIUS led his legions: safely now
I to some valiant friends unmask'd myself,
And with them plann'd how surest we might draw
Our forces to CAERNARVON. Here our art
So well avail'd, that now at SNOWDON's foot
Full twenty troops of hardy veterans wait
To call my fire their leader.

MODRED.

Valiant Youth——

EVELINA.

He is——I said he was a valiant Youth;
Nor has he sham'd his race. Yes, I will fly
And bless him with the news.

[Exit Evelina,

S C E N E IV.

MODRED, ARVIRAGUS, CHORUS,

MODRED.

We do believe

Thy modest tale: and may the righteous Gods
Thus ever shed upon thy noble breast
Discretion's cooling dew. When nurtur'd so,
Then, only then, doth valour bloom mature.

ARVIRAGUS.

Yet vain is valour, howsoe'er it bloom.
Druid, the Gods frown on us. All my hopes
Are blasted. I shall ne'er rejoin my friends;
Ne'er bless them with my father. Holy men,
I have a tale to tell, will shake your souls.

Your

Your Mona is invaded : Rome approaches ;
Ev'n to these groves approaches.

MODRED.

Horror ! horror !

ARVIRAGUS.

Late as I landed on yon highest beach,
Where, nodding from the rocks, the poplars fling
Their scatter'd arms, and dash them in the wave ;
There were their vessels moor'd, as if they fought
Concealment in the shade ; and as I past
Up yon thick-planted ridge, I 'spy'd their helms
'Mid brakes and boughs trench'd in the heath below,
Where like a nest of night-worms did they glitter,
Sprinkling the plain with brightness. On I sped
With silent step, yet oft did pass so near,
'Twas next to prodigy I 'scap'd unseen.

MODRED.

Their numbers, Prince ?

ARVIRAGUS.

Few, if mine hasty eye
Did find and count them all.

MODRED.

O brethren, brethren !

Treason and sacrilege, worse foes than Rome,
Have led Rome hither. Instant seize that wretch,
And bring him to our presence.

S C E N E V.

MODRED, ELIDURUS, ARVIRAGUS,
CHORUS.

MODRED.

Say, thou false one !

What doom befits the slave who sells his country ?

ELIDURUS.

Death, sudden death !

MO-

M O D R E D.

No ; lingering piece-meal death !
And to such death thy brother and thyself
We now devote. Villain, thy deeds are known !
'Tis known ye led the impious Romans hither
To slaughter us ev'n on our holy altars.

E L I D U R U S.

That on my soul doth lie some secret grief
These looks perforce will tell. It is not fear,
Druids, it is not fear that shakes me thus :
The great Gods know it is not ; ye can never :
For, what tho' wisdom lifts ye next those gods,
Ye cannot, like to them, unlock men's breasts,
And read their inmost thoughts. Ah ! that ye could.

A R V I R A G U S.

What hast thou done ?

E L I D U R U S.

What, Prince, I will not tell,

M O D R E D.

Wretch, there are means——

E L I D U R U S.

I know, and terrible means ;

And 'tis both fit that you should try those means,
And I endure them : yet I think my patience
Will for some space baffle your torturing fury.

M O D R E D.

Be that best known, when our inflicted goads
Harrow thy flesh !

A R V I R A G U S.

Stranger, ere this is try'd,
Confess the whole of thy black perfidy :
So black, that when I look upon thy youth,
Read thy mild eye, and mark thy modest brow,
I think, indeed, thou durst not.

E L I.

ELIDURUS.

Such a crime,

Indeed, I durst not ; and would rather be
The very wretch thou see'st. I'll speak no more.

MODRED.

Brethren, 'tis so. The virgin's thoughts were just :
This Youth has been deceiv'd.

ELIDURUS.

Yes, one word more :

You say the Romans have invaded Mona.
Give me a sword and twenty honest Britons,
And I will quell those Romans. Vain demand !
Alas ! you cannot. Ye are men of peace.
Religion's self forbids. Lead then to torture.

ARVIRAGUS.

Now on my soul this Youth doth move me much.

MODRED.

Think not religion and our holy office
Doth teach us tamely, like the bleating lamb,
To crouch before oppression, and with neck
Outstretch'd await the stroke. Know, when I blow
That sacred trumpet bound with fable fillets
To yonder branching oak, the awful sound
Calls forth a thousand Britons train'd alike
In holy and in martial exercise ;
Not by such mode and rule as Romans use,
But of that fierce portentous horrible sort
As shall appall even Romans.

ELIDURUS.

Gracious Gods !

Then there are hopes indeed. Oh call them instant :
This Prince will lead them on : I'll follow him,
Tho' in my chains, and some way dash them round
To harm the haughty foe.

ARVI-

ARVIRAGUS.

A thousand Britons!
And arm'd! O instant blow the sacred trump,
And let me head them. Yet methinks this Youth—

MODRED.

I know what thou would'st say: might join thee, Prince.
True; were he free from crime, or had confess.

ELIDURUS.

Confess! ah, think not, I will e'er—

ARVIRAGUS.

Reflect.

Either thyself or brother must have wrong'd us:
Then why conceal—

ELIDURUS.

Hast thou a brother? No!
Else had'st thou spar'd the word; and yet a sister,
Lovely as thine, might more than teach thee, Prince,
What 'tis to have a brother. Hear me, Druids!
Tho' I would prize an hour of freedom now
Before an age of any after date;
Tho' I would seize it as the gift of heav'n;
And use it as heav'n's gift; yet do not think
I so will purchase it. Give it me freely,
I yet will spurn the boon, and hug my chains,
Till you do swear by your own hoary heads,
My brother shall be safe.

MODRED:

Excellent Youth!

Thy words do speak thy soul, and such a soul
As wakes our wonder. Thou art free; thy brother
Shall be thine honour's pledge: so will we use him
As thou art false or true.

ELIDURUS.

I ask no other.

ARVIRAGUS.

Thus then, my fellow soldier, to thy clasp

I give the hand of friendship. Noble Youth !
We'll speed, or die together.

C H O R U S.

Hear us, Prince !

Mona permits not that he fight her battles
'Till duly purified : for tho' his soul
Took up unwittingly this deed of baseness,
Yet is lustration meet. Learn, that in vice
There is a noisome rankness which offends
Heav'n's pure divinities, as us the stench
Of pois'nous weed obscene. Hence doth the man,
Who ev'n converses with a villain, need
As much purgation as the pallid wretch
'Scap'd from the walls, where frowning Pestilence
Spreads wide her livid banners. For this cause,
Ye Priests, conduct the Youth to yonder fount,
And do the needful rites.

[Exeunt Priests with Elidurus.]

For thee, brave Prince,

Some fit repose is needful. To our cave,
Behold, we lead thee ; and, some moments there
To that repose allow'd, we then will bless
Thy duteous eyes with their dear father's presence.

[Exeunt.]

END of the THIRD ACT.

G

ACT

[50]

A C T IV.

S C E N E I.

The curtain draws up, and discovers MODRED and the CHORUS before the altar: then, on one side, enter CARACTACUS and EVELINA; on the other, ARVIRAGUS.

CARACTACUS, ARVIRAGUS, CHORUS,
EVELINA.

C A R A C T A C U S.

O MY ARVIRAGUS! my son! my son!
What joy, what transport, doth thine aged fire
Feel in these filial foldings! Speak not, boy,
Nor interrupt that heart-felt ecstasy
Should strike us mute. I know what thou would'st say,
Yet, prithee, peace. Thy sister's voice hath clear'd thee,
And, could excuse find words at this blest moment,
Trust me, I'd give it vent. But 'tis enough;
Thy father welcomes thee to him and honour:
Honour, that now with rapt'rous certainty
Calls thee his own true offspring. Dost thou weep?
Ah, if thy tears swell not from joy's free spring,
I beg thee, spare them. I have done thee wrong;
Can make thee no atonement; none, alas!
Thy father scarce can bless thee as he ought;
Unblest himself, beset with foes around,
Bereft of queen, of kingdom, and of soldiers,
He can but give thee portion of his dangers,
Perchance and of his chains: Yet droop not, boy,
Virtue is still thine own.

ARVI-

ARVIRAGUS.

It is, my Father!

Pure as from thine illustrious fount it came;
And that unfullied, let the world oppress us;
Let fraud and falsehood rivet fetters on us;
Still shall our souls be free: Yet hope is ours
As well as virtue.

CARACTACUS.

Spoken like a Briton.

True, hope is ours, and therefore let's prepare:
The moments now are precious. Tell us, Druid!
Is it not meet we see the bands drawn out,
And mark their due array?

MODRED.

Monarch, ev'n now

They skirt the grove.

CARACTACUS.

Then let us to their front——

MODRED.

But is the traitor-youth in safety lodg'd?

CARACTACUS.

Druid, he fled——

MODRED.

O fatal flight to Mona!

CARACTACUS.

But what of that? ARVIRAGUS is here;
My son is here: let then the traitor go.
By this he has join'd the Romans: let him join them;
A single arm, and that a villain's arm,
Can lend but little aid to any powers
Oppos'd to truth and virtue. Come, my son,
Let's to the troops, and marshal them with speed.
That done, we from these venerable men
Will claim their ready blessing: then to battle;

And the swift sun, ev'n at his purple dawn,
Shall spy us crown'd with conquest, or with death.
[*Exeunt Caractacus and Arviragus,*

S C E N E II.

MODRED, EVELINA, CHORUS.

MODRED.

What may his flight portend? Say, EVELINA!
How came this youth to 'scape?

EVELINA.

And that to tell
Will fix much blame on my impatient folly:
For, ere your hallow'd lips had given permission,
I flew with eager haste to bear my father
News of his son's return. But my rash tongue
Scarce nam'd ARVIRAGUS, ere the false stranger
Fled to the cavern's mouth.

CHORUS.

The king pursued?

EVELINA.

Alas! he mark'd him not, for 'twas the moment
When he had all to ask, and all to fear,
'Touching my brother's valour: yet he soon
Perceiv'd his prisoner gone, and with fierce glance
Survey'd the cavern round; then snatch'd his spear,
And menac'd to pursue the flying traitor:
But I with prayers (O pardon if they err'd!)
Withheld his step, for to the left the youth
Had wing'd his way, where the thick underwood
Afforded sure retreat.

CHORUS.

Maiden, enough.

Better, perchance, for us, if he were captive:
But in the justice of their cause, and heav'n,
Do Mona's sons confide.

SCENE

S C E N E III.

BARD, MODRED, ELIDURUS, EVELINA,
CHORUS.

B A R D.

Druid, the rites
Are finish'd ; all save that which crowns the rest,
And which pertains to thy blest hand alone :
For that he kneels before thee.

M O D R E D.

Take him hence :
We may not trust him forth to fight our cause.

E L I D U R U S.

Now by ANDRASTE's throne——

M O D R E D.

Nay, swear not, Youth ;
The tie is broke that held thy fealty :
Thy brother's fled.

E L I D U R U S.

Fled !

M O D R E D.

To the Romans fled.

Yes ; thou hast cause to tremble.

E L I D U R U S.

Ah, VELLINUS !

Does thus our love, does thus our friendship end ?
Was I thy brother, youth, and hast thou left me ?
Yes ; and how left me ? cruel as thou art,
The victim of thy crimes !

M O D R E D.

True : thou must die.

E L I D U R U S.

I pray ye then on your best mercy, Fathers,
It may be speedy. I would fain be dead,
If this be life : yet I must doubt ev'n that ;

For

For falshood of this strange stupendous sort
Sets firm-ey'd Reason on a gaze, mistrusting
That what she sees in palpable plain form,
The stars in yon blue arch, these woods, these caverns,
Are all meer tricks of cozenage; nothing real;
The vision of a vision. If he's fled,
I ought to hate this brother.

M O D R E D.

Yet thou dost not,

E L I D U R U S.

But when astonishment will give me leave,
Perchance I shall.—And yet he is my brother;
And he was virtuous once. Yes, ye vile Romans!
Yes, I must die before my thirsty sword
Drinks one rich drop of vengeance. Yet, ye robbers!
Yet will I curse you with my dying lips:
'Twas you that stole away my brother's virtue,

M O D R E D.

Now then prepare to die.

E L I D U R U S.

I am prepar'd.

Yet, since I cannot now (what most I wish'd)
By manly prowess guard this lovely maid,
Permit that on your holiest earth I kneel,
And pour one fervent prayer for her protection.
Allow me this; for, though you think me false,
The Gods will hear me.

E V E L I N A.

I can hold no longer.

O Druid, Druid, at thy feet I fall!
Yes, I must plead, (away with virgin-blushes)
For such a youth must plead. I'll die to save him.
O take my life, and let him fight for Mona.

M O D R E D.

Virgin, arise. His virtue hath redeem'd him,
And he shall fight for thee, and for his country.
Youth,

Youth, thank us with thy deeds. The time is short,
And now with reverence take our high lustration :
Thrice do we sprinkle thee with day-break dew
Shook from the May-thorn blossom ; twice and thrice
Touch we thy forehead with our holy wand :
Now thou art fully purg'd. Now rise restor'd
To virtue and to us. Hence then, my son,
Hie thee to yonder altar, where our Bards
Shall arm thee duly both with helm and sword
For warlike enterprize. *Exit Elidurus.*

S C E N E IV.

CARACTACUS, ARVIRAGUS, EVELINA,
MODRED, CHORUS.

C A R A C T A C U S.

'Tis true, my Son !
Bold are their bearings, and I fear me not
But they have hearts will not belie their looks.
I like them well. Yet would to righteous heav'n
Those valiant veterans that on Snowdon guard
Their scanty pittance of bleak liberty
Were here to join them ; we would teach these wolves,
Tho' we permit their rage to prowl our coasts,
That vengeance waits them ere they rob our altars.
Hail, Druid, hail ! we find thy valiant guards
Accoutred so, as well bespeaks the wisdom
That fram'd their phalanx. We but wait thy blessing
To lead them 'gainst the foe.

M O D R E D.

C A R A C T A C U S !

Behold this sword : The sword of old BELINUS,
Stain'd with the blood of giants, and its name
TRIFINGUS. Many an age its charmed blade
Has slept within yon consecrated trunk.
Lo, I unsheath it, King ! upon thy knee

Receive

Receive the sacred pledge. And, mark our words—
 By the bright circle of the golden sun;
 By the brief courses of the errant moon;
 By the dread potency of every star
 That studs the mystic zodiac's burning girth;
 By each, and all of these supernal signs,
 We do adjure thee with this trusty blade,
 To guard yon central Oak, whose holiest stem
 Involves the spirit of high TARANIS:
 This be thy charge; to which in aid we join
 Ourselves, and our sage brethren. With our vassals
 Thy Son and the Brigantian Prince shall make
 Incurſion on the foe.

C A R A C T A C U S.

In this, and all,
 Be ours observance meet. Yet surely, Druid,
 The fresh and active vigour of these youths
 Might better suit with this important charge.
 Not that my heart shrinks at the glorious task,
 But will with ready zeal pour forth its blood
 Upon the sacred roots, my firmest courage
 Might fail to save. Yet, Fathers, I am old;
 And if I fell the foremost in the onset,
 Should leave a son behind, might still defend you.

M O D R E D.

The sacred adjuration we have utter'd
 May never be recall'd.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Then be it so.

But do not think I counsel this thro' fear:
 Old as I am, I trust with half our powers
 I could drive back these Romans to their ships;
 Dastards, that come as doth the cowering fowler
 To tangle me with snares and take me tamely:
 Slaves, they shall find, that ere they gain their prey,
 They have to hunt it boldly with barb'd spears,

And

And meet such conflict as the chafed boar
Gives to his stout assailants. O ye Gods!
That I might instant face them.

M O D R E D.

Be thy Son's

The onset.

A R V I R A G U S.

From his soul that son doth thank ye,
Blessing the wisdom that preserves his father
Thus to the last. Steel then, ye powers of Heav'n!
Steel my firm soul with your own fortitude,
Free from alloy of passion. Give me courage,
That knows not rage; revenge, that knows not malice;
Let me not thirst for carnage, but for conquest:
And conquest gain'd, sleep vengeance in my breast,
Ere in its sheath my sword.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Oh hear his Father!

If ever rashness spurr'd me on, great Gods,
To acts of danger thirsting for renown;
If e'er my eager soul pursu'd its course
Beyond just Reason's limit, visit not
My faults on him. I am the thing you made me,
Vindictive, bold, precipitate, and fierce:
But as you gave to him a milder mind,
O bless him, bless him with a milder fate!

E V E L I N A.

Nor yet unheard let EVELINA pour
Her pray'rs and tears. Oh hear a hapless maid,
That ev'n thro' half the years her life has number'd,
Ev'n nine long years has dragg'd a trembling being,
Beset with pains and perils. Give her peace;
And, to endear it more, be that blest peace
Won by her brother's sword. Oh bless his arm,
And bless his valiant followers, One,—and all.

H

E L I-

ELIDURUS *entering armed.*

Hear, Heav'n! and let this pure and virgin prayer
Plead ev'n for ELIDURUS, whose sad soul
Cannot look up to your immortal thrones,
And urge his own request: Else would he ask,
That all the dangers of th' approaching fight
Might fall on him alone: That every spear
The Romans wield might at his breast be aim'd;
Each arrow darted on his rattling helm;
That so the brother of this beauteous maid,
Returning safe with victory and peace,
Might bear them to her bosom.

M O D R E D.

Now rise all,
And Heav'n, that knows, what most ye ought to ask,
Grant all ye ought to have. Behold, the stars
Are faded; universal darkness reigns.
Now is the dreadful hour, now will our torches
Glare with more livid horror, now our shrieks,
And clanking arms will more appall the foe.
But heed, ye Bards, that for the sign of onset,
Ye sound the antientest of all your rhymes,
Whose birth tradition notes not, nor who fram'd
Its lofty strains: The force of that high air
Did JULIUS feel, when, fir'd by it, our fathers
First drove the robber recreant to his ships.
Now forth, brave Pair! Go, with our blessing go;
Mute be the march, as ye ascend the hill:
Then, when ye hear the sound of our shrill trumpet,
Fall on the foe.

C A R A C T A C U S.

And glory be thy guide;
Pride of my soul, go forth and conquer.

E V E L I N A.

Brother,
Yet one embrace. O thou much-honour'd Stranger,

I charge thee fight by my dear brother's side,
And shield him from the foe ; for he is brave,
And will, with bold and well-directed arm,
Return thy succour. [*Exeunt Arviragus and Elidurus.*]

M O D R E D.

Now, ye Priests, with speed
Strew on the altar's height your sacred leaves,
And light the morning flame. But why is this ?
Why doth our brother MADOR snatch his harp
From yonder bough ? Why this way bend his step ?

C A R A C T A C U S.

He is entranc'd. The fillet bursts that bound
His liberal locks ; his snowy vestments fall
In ampler folds ; and all his floating form
Doth seem to glisten with divinity !
Yet is he speechless. Say, thou Chief of Bards,
What is there in this airy vacancy,
That thou with fiery and irregular glance
Should'st scan thus wildly ? wherefore heaves thy breast ?
Why starts——

O D E.

M A D O R.

Hark !

[*Symphony behind the Scenes.*]

Hark !

[*Symphony louder.*]

Hark !

[*Full Symphony.*]

Hark ! heard ye not yon footstep dread,
That shook the earth with thund'ring tread ?
'Twas Death.—In haste
The Warrior past ;
High tower'd his helmed head :
I mark'd his mail, I mark'd his shield,
I 'spy'd the sparkling of his spear,
I saw his giant arm the falchion wield ;
Wide wav'd the bick'ring blade, and fir'd the angry air.

H 2

On

On me (he cry'd) my Britons, wait,
To lead you to the field of fate

I come : Yon car,
That cleaves the air,
Descends to throne my state :

I mount your Champion and your God.
My proud steeds neigh beneath the thong :

Hark ! to my wheels of brags, that rattle loud !
Hark ! to my clarion shrill, that brays the woods among !

Full C H O R U S.

*He mounts our Champion and our God.
His proud steeds neigh beneath the thong :*

*Hark ! to his wheels of brags, that rattle loud !
Hark ! to his clarion shrill, that brays the woods among !*

M A D O R.

Fear not now the Fever's fire,
Fear not now the Death-bed groan,
Pangs that torture, pains that tire,
Bed-rid age with feeble moan :

These domestic terrors wait
Hourly at my palace gate ;

And when o'er slothful realms my rod I wave,
These on the tyrant King and coward Slave,
Rush with vindictive rage, and drag them to their grave,

But ye, my Sons, at this high hour
Shall share the fullness of my pow'r :

From all your bows,
In level'd rows,
My own dread shafts shall shower.

Go then to conquest, gladly go,
Deal forth my dole of destiny,

With all my fury dash the trembling foe
Down to those darksome dens, where Rome's pale
spectres lie ;

Where

Where creeps the ninefold stream profound
Her black inexorable round,

And on the bank,
To willows dank,
The shivering ghosts are bound.

Twelve thousand crescents all shall swell
To full-orb'd pride, and fading die,
Ere they again in life's gay mansions dwell :
Not such the meed that crowns the sons of Liberty.

No, my Britons ! battle-flain,
Rapture gilds your parting hour :
I, that all despotic reign,
Claim but there a moment's power.

Swiftly the soul of British flame
Animates some kindred frame,
Swiftly to life and light triumphant flies,
Exults again in martial ecstacies,
Again for freedom fights, again for freedom dies.

Full C H O R U S.

*The godlike soul of British flame
Animates some kindred frame,
Swiftly to life and light triumphant flies,
Exults again in martial ecstacies,
Again for freedom fights, again for freedom dies.*

[*Exeunt.*

END of the FOURTH ACT.

ACT

[62]

A C T V.

S C E N E I.

*Enter CARACTACUS hastily, but with-held by MODRED
and the CHORUS.*

C A R A C T A C U S.

DRUID, with-hold me not. The thundering voice
Still rolls around my ear. Death calls to arms,
Hark ! Hark ! he calls again ! Champion, lead on,
I follow ; give me way, my soul is British ;
Does he not say unconquered, undismay'd,
The British soul revives ? Yes, some blest shaft
Shall rid me of this clog of cumb'rous age ;
And I again shall in some happier mould
Rise to redeem my country.

M O D R E D.

Stay thee, Prince,
And mark what clear and amber-skirted clouds
Rise from the altar's verge, and cleave the skies :
Oh 'tis a prosperous omen ! Soon expect
To hear glad tidings.

C A R A C T A C U S.

I will send them to thee.

M O D R E D.

But see, a Bard approaches, and he bears them :
Else is his eye no herald to his heart.

S C E N E II.

BARD, MODRED, CARACTACUS, CHORUS.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Speedily tell thy tale.

B A R D.

A tale like mine,

I trust your ears will willingly pursue
Thro' each glad circumstance. First, Monarch, learn,
The Roman troop is fled.

M O D R E D.

Great Gods, we thank ye!

C A R A C T A C U S.

Fought they not ere they fled? Oh tell me all.

B A R D.

Silent, as night, we pac'd up yonder hill,
While hid beneath its sacrificial pall,
Did sleep our holy fire, nor saw the air,
'Till to that pass we came, where whilom BRUTE
Planted his five hoar altars. Instant there,
We cloth'd each rocky pile with livid flame.
Near each a white-rob'd Druid, whose stern voice
Thunder'd deep execrations on the foe.
Now wak'd our horrid symphony, now all
Our harps terrific rang: Mean while the grove
Trembled, the altars shook, and thro' our ranks
Our sacred sisters rush'd with funeral brands,
Hurl'd round with menacing fury. On they rush'd
In fierce and frantic mood, as is their wont
Amid the magic rites, they do to NIGHT
In their deep dens below. Motions like these
Were never dar'd before in open air!

M O D R E D.

Did I not say, we had a pow'r within us,
That might appall ev'n Romans?

B A R D.

And it did.

They stood aghast, and to our vollied darts
Scarce rais'd a warding shield. The sacred trumpet
Then rent the air, and instant at the signal
Rush'd down ARVIRAGUS with all our vassals:
A hot, but short-liv'd, conflict then ensu'd:
For soon they fled. I saw the Romans fly,
Before I left the field.

C A R-

C A R A C T A C U S.

My son pursu'd ?

B A R D.

The Prince and ELIDURUS, like twin lions,
Did side by side engage. Death seem'd to guide
Their swords, no stroke fell fruitless, every wound
Gave him a victim.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Far did they pursue ?

B A R D.

Ev'n to the ships : For I descry'd the rout,
Far as the twilight gleam would aid my sight.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Now, thanks to the bright star that rul'd his birth ;
Yes, he will soon return to claim my blessing,
And he shall have it pour'd in tears of joy
On his bold breast ! methought I heard a step :
Is it not his ?

B A R D.

'Tis some of our own train,
And as I think, they lead six Romans captive.

S C E N E III.

MODRED, CARACTACUS, CAPTIVES.

CHORUS.

C A R A C T A C U S.

They seem of bold demeanor, and have helms,
That speak them leaders.

M O D R E D.

Bear them to the cavern.

C A R A C T A C U S.

But while they live, treat them as men should men,
And not as Rome treats Britain. [*Exeunt Captives.*]

S C E N E

[65]

S C E N E IV.

EVELINA, CHARACTERUS, MODRED,
CHORUS.

EVELINA.

O My father,

Support me, take me trembling to your arms ;
All is not well. Ah me, my fears o'ercome me !

CHARACTERUS.

What means my child ?

EVELINA.

Alas ! we are betray'd.

Ev'n now as wandering in yon eastern grove
I call'd the Gods to aid us, the dread sound
Of many hasty steps did meet mine ear :
This way they press.

CHARACTERUS.

Daughter, thy fears are vain.

EVELINA.

Methought I saw the flame of lighted brands,
And what did glitter to my dazzled sight,
Like swords and helms.

CHARACTERUS.

All, all the feeble coinage

Of maiden fear.

EVELINA

Nay, if mine ear mistook not,

I heard the traitor's voice, who that way 'scap'd,
Calling to arms.

CHARACTERUS.

Away with idle terrors !

Know, thy brave brother's helm is crown'd with conquest,
Our foes are fled, their leaders are our captives.
Smile, my lov'd child, and imitate the fun,
That rises ruddy from behind yon Oaks
To hail him victor.

I

MODRED.

MODRED.

That the rising Sun !

O horror ! horror ! sacrilegious fires
Devour our groves : They blaze, they blaze ! Oh sound
The trump again ; recall the Prince, or all
Is lost.

CARACTACUS.

Druid, where is thy fortitude ?

Do not I live ? Is not this holy sword
Firm in my grasp ? I will preserve your groves.
Britons, I go : Let those that dare die nobly,
Follow my step. *[Exit Caractacus.]*

EVELINA.

Oh whither does he go ?

Return, return : Ye holy men, recall him.
What is his arm against a host of Romans ?
Oh I have lost a father !

MODRED.

Ruthless Gods !

Ye take away our souls : A general panic
Reigns thro' the grove. Oh fly, my brethren, fly
To aid the King, fly to preserve your altars !
Alas ! 'tis all in vain ; our fate is fixt.
Look there, look there, thou miserable maid !
Behold thy bleeding brother.

SCENE V.

ARVIRAGUS, ELIDURUS, EVELINA,
MODRED, CHORUS.

ARVIRAGUS.

Thanks, good youth !

Safe hast thou brought me to that holy spot,
Where I did wish to die. I would drag out
This life, tho' at some cost of throbs and pangs,
Just long enough to claim my father's blessing,

And

And sigh my last breath in my sister's arms.—
And here she kneels, poor maid ! all dumb with grief.
Restrain thy sorrow, gentlest EVELINA !
True, thou dost see me bleed : I bleed to death.

E V E L I N A.

Say'st thou to death ? O Gods ! the barbed shaft
Is buried in his breast. Yes, he must die ;
And I, alas ! am doom'd to see him die.
Where are your healing arts, ye holy men ?
Pluck me but out this shaft, staunch but this blood,
And I will call down blessings on your heads
With such a fervency—alas ! ye cannot,
Then let me beg you on my bended knee,
Give to my mis'ry some chill opiate drug
May shut up all my senses.—Yes, good Fathers,
Mingle the potion so, that it may kill me
Just at the instant this poor languisher
Heaves his last sigh.

A R V I R A G U S.

Talk not thus wildly, Sister,
Think on our father's age——

E V E L I N A.

Alas ! my Brother !
We have no father now ; or if we have,
He is a captive.

A R V I R A G U S.

Captive ! O my wound !
It stings me now—But is it so ? [*Turning to the Chorus.*

M O D R E D.

Alas !
We know no more, save that he fallied single
To meet the foe, whose unexpected host
Round by the east had wound their fraudulent march,
And fir'd our groves.

ELIDURUS.

O fatal, fatal valour!

Then is he seiz'd, or slain.

ARVIRAGUS.

Too sure he is!

Druid, not half the Romans met our swords;

We found the fraud too late: the rest are yonder.

MODRED.

How could they gain the pass?

ARVIRAGUS.

The wretch, that fled

That way, return'd, conducting half their powers;

And—But thy pardon, youth, I will not wound thee,

He is thy brother.

ELIDURUS.

Thus my honest sword

Shall force the blood from the detested heart,

That holds alliance with him.

ARVIRAGUS.

ELIDURUS!

Hold, on our friendship, hold. Thou noble youth,

Look on this innocent maid. She must to Rome,

Captive to Rome. Thou seest warm life flow from me,

Ere long she'll have no brother. Heav'n's my witness,

I do not wish, that thou should'st live the slave

Of Rome: But yet she is my sister.

ELIDURUS.

Prince!

Thou urgest that, might make me drag an age

In fetters worse than Roman. I will live,

And while I live——

SCENE VI.

Enter BARD.

Fly to your caverns, Druids!

The grove's beset around. The chief approaches.

CHORUS.

M O D R E D.

Let him approach, we will confront his pride;
The Seer that rules amid the groves of Mona
Has not to fear his fury. What tho' age
Slacken our sinews; what tho' shield and sword
Give not their iron aid to guard our body;
Yet virtue arms our soul, and 'gainst that panoply
What 'vails the rage of robbers? Let him come.

A R V I R A G U S.

I faint apace.—Ye venerable Men,
If ye can save this body from pollution,
If ye can tomb me in this sacred place,
I trust ye will. I fought to save these groves,
And, fruitless tho' I fought, some grateful Oak,
I trust, will spread its reverential gloom
O'er my pale ashes—Ah! that pang was death!
My sister, Oh!—— [Dies.

E L I D U R U S.

She faints! Ah raise her! ——

E V E L I N A.

Yes,

Now he is dead. I felt his spirit go
In a cold sigh, and as it pass'd, methought
It paus'd a while, and trembled on my lips!
Take me not from him: Breathless as he is,
He is my brother still, and if the Gods
Do please to grace him with some happier being,
They ne'er can give to him a fonder sister.

M O D R E D.

Brethren, surround the corse, and, ere the foe
Approaches, chaunt with meet solemnity
That grateful dirge your dying champion claims.

[Symphony.

M A D O R.

Lo! where incumbent o'er the shade
Rome's rav'ning eagle bows her beaked head!

Yet

Yet while a moment fate affords ;
While yet a moment freedom stays ;
That moment, which outweighs
Eternity's unmeasur'd hoards,
Shall Mona's grateful Bards employ
To hymn their godlike Hero to the sky.

Second B A R D.

A I R.

*Radiant Ruler of the day !
Pause upon thy orb sublime,
Bid this awful moment stay,
Bind it on the brow of time ;
While Mona's trembling echoes sigh
To strains that trill when heroes die.*

Fourth B A R D.

A I R.

*Hear our harps, in accents slow,
Breathe the dignity of woe,
Solemn notes that pant, and pause,
While the last majestic close,
In diapason deep is drown'd ;
Notes that Mona's harps should sound.*

Third B A R D.

A I R.

*See our tears, in sober shower,
O'er this shrine of glory pour ;
Holy tears, by Virtue shed,
That embalm the valiant dead ;
In these our sacred song we steep,
Tears that Mona's Bards should weep.*

T R I O.

*Radiant Ruler ! hear us call
Blessings on the godlike Youth,
Who dar'd to fight, who dar'd to fall,
For Britain, Freedom, and for Truth.*

His

*His dying groan, his parting sigh,
Was music for the Gods on high;
'Twas Valor's hymn to Liberty.*

M A D O R.

Ring out ye mortal strings !
Answer thou heav'nly harp instinct with spirit all,
That o'er ANDRASTES' throne self-warbling swings.
There, where ten thousand spheres, in measur'd chime,
Roll their majestic melodies along,
Thou guid'st the thundering song,
Pois'd on thy jasper arch sublime.
Yet shall thy heav'nly accents deign
To mingle with our mortal strain,
And Heav'n and Earth unite, in chorus high,
While Freedom wafts her champion to the sky.

Full C H O R U S.

*ANDRASTES' heav'nly harp shall deign
To mingle with our mortal strain,
And Heav'n and Earth unite, in chorus high,
While Freedom wafts her champion to the sky.*

S C E N E VII.

AULUS DIDIUS, MODRED, EVELINA, ELI-
DURUS, CHORUS.

A U L U S D I D I U S.

Ye bloody priests,
Behold we burst on your infernal rites,
And bid you pause. Instant restore our soldiers,
Nor hope that Superstition's ruthless step
Shall wade in Roman gore. Ye savage men,
Did not our laws give licence to all faiths,
We would o'erturn your altars, headlong heave
These shapeless symbols of your barbarous Gods,
And let the golden sun into your caves.

MODRED.

MODRED.

Servant of CÆSAR, has thine impious tongue
Spent the black venom of its blasphemy?
It has: then take our curses on thy head,
Ev'n his fell curses, who doth reign in Mona,
Vicegerent of those Gods thy pride insults.

AULUS DIDDIUS.

Bold priest, I scorn thy curses, and thyself.
Soldiers, go search the caves, and free the prisoners.
Take heed ye seize CARACTACUS alive.
Arrest yon youth; load him with heaviest irons;
He shall to CÆSAR answer for his crime.

ELIDURUS.

I stand prepar'd to triumph in my crime.

AULUS DIDDIUS.

'Tis well, proud boy——Look to the beauteous maid
[To the soldiers.]
That, 'tranc'd in grief, bends o'er yon bleeding corse:
Respect her sorrows.

EVELINA.

Hence ye barbarous men,
Ye shall not take him welt'ring thus in blood,
To shew at Rome what British virtue was.
Avaunt! The breathless body that ye touch
Was once ARVIRAGUS!

AULUS DIDDIUS.

Fear us not, Princess!

We reverence the dead.

MODRED.

Would too to heav'n
Ye reverenc'd the Gods but ev'n enough
Not to debase with Slavery's cruel chain
What they created free.

AULUS DIDDIUS.

The Romans fight
Not to enslave, but humanize the world.

MODRED.

MODRED.

Go to, we will not parley with thee, Roman:
Instant pronounce our doom.

AULUS DIDIUS.

Hear it, and thank us:

This once our clemency shall spare your groves,
If, at our call, ye yield the British King:
Yet learn, when next ye aid the foes of CÆSAR,
That each old Oak, whose solemn gloom ye boast,
Shall bow beneath our axes.

MODRED.

Be they blasted

Whene'er their shade forgets to shelter virtue.

SCENE VIII.

Enter BARD.

Mourn, Mona, mourn. CARACTACUS is captive!
And dost thou smile, false Roman? Do not think
He fell an easy prey. Know, ere he yielded,
Thy bravest veterans bled. He too, thy Spy,
The base Brigantian Prince, hath seal'd his fraud
With death. The brave CARACTACUS himself
Seiz'd his false throat; and as he gave the blow
Indignant thunder'd, "Thus is my last stroke
"The stroke of justice." Numbers then oppress'd him;
I saw the slave that cowardly behind
Pinion'd his arms; I saw the sacred sword
Writh'd from his grasp; I saw, what now ye see,
Inglorious fight! those barbarous bonds upon him.

SCENE IX.

CARACTACUS, AULUS DIDIUS, MODRED,
CHORUS, &c.

CARACTACUS.

Romans, methinks the malice of your tyrant
Might furnish heavier chains. Old as I am,

K

Trust

Trust me, I've strength to bear the weightiest load
Injustice dares impose.—

Proud-crested soldier! [*To Didius.*]
Say, dost thou read less terror on my brow
Than when thou met'st me in the fields of war,
Heading my nations? No: my free-born soul
Has scorn still left to sparkle thro' these eyes,
And frown defiance on thee.—Is it thus!

[*Seeing his son's body.*]
Then I'm indeed a captive. Mighty Gods!
My soul, my soul submits: Patient it bears
The pond'rous load of grief ye heap upon it,
And is the sad tame thing it ought to be,
Coopt in a servile body.

A U L U S D I D I U S.

Droop not, King.
When CLAUDIUS, the great master of the world,
Shall hear the noble story of thy valour,
His pity—

C A R A C T A C U S.

Can a Roman pity, soldier?
And if he can, Gods! must a Briton bear it?
ARVIRAGUS, my bold, my breathless boy,
Thou hast escap'd such pity; thou art free.
Here in high Mona shall thy noble limbs
Rest in a noble grave; Posterity
Shall pile sepulchral stones upon thy corse;
Whilst mine—

A U L U S D I D I U S.

The morn doth hasten our departure,
Prepare thee, King, to go: A fav'ring gale
Now swells our sails.

C A R A C T A C U S.

Inhuman that thou art!
Dost thou deny a moment for a father
To shed a few warm tears o'er his dead son?

I tell thee, Chief, this act might claim a life
To do that office duly. Cruel man !
And thou deniest me moments. Be it so.
I know you Romans weep not for your children;
Ye triumph o'er your tears, and think it valour:
I triumph in my tears. Yes, best-lov'd boy;
Yes, I can weep, can tear these few grey hairs,
The only honours war and age have left me.
Ah, son ! thou might'st have rul'd o'er many nations,
As did thy royal ancestry : but I,
Rash that I was, ne'er knew the golden curb
Discretion hangs on brav'ry ; else perchance
These men that fasten fetters on thy father
Had su'd to him for peace, and claim'd his friendship.

A U L U S D I D I U S.

But thou wast still implacable to Rome,
And scorn'd her friendship.

C A R A C T A C U S *starting up from the body.*

Soldier, I had arms,
Had neighing steeds to whirl my iron cars,
Had wealth, dominion. Dost thou wonder, Roman,
I fought to save them ? What if CÆSAR aims
To lord it universal o'er the world,
Shall the world tamely crouch at CÆSAR's footstool ?

A U L U S D I D I U S.

Read in thy fate our answer. Yet if sooner
Thy pride had yielded——

C A R A C T A C U S.

Thank thy Gods, I did not.
Had it been so, the glory of thy master,
Like my misfortunes, had been short and trivial,
Oblivion's ready prey : Now, after struggling
Nine years, and that right bravely, 'gainst a tyrant,
I am his slave to treat as seems him good :
If cruelly, 'twill be an easy task
To bow a wretch, alas, how bow'd already !

Down to the dust: If well, his clemency
May shine in honour's annals, and adorn
Himself: it boots not me. Look there! look there!
The slave that shot that dart kill'd ev'ry hope
Of lost CARACTACUS! Arise, my daughter.
Alas! poor Prince! art thou too in vile fetters?

[To Elidurus.

Come hither, Youth: Be thou to me a son,
To her a brother. Thus with trembling arms
I lead you forth: Children, we go to Rome.
Weep'st thou, my girl? I prithee hoard thy tears
For the sad meeting of thy captive mother:
For we have much to tell her. Think'st thou, maid,
Her gentleness can bear that tale, and live?

[Pointing to his dead Son.

And yet she must. O Gods, I grow a talker!
Grief and old age are ever full of words:
But I'll be mute. Adieu, ye holy men!
Yet one look more.—Now lead us hence for ever,

A Dead March.

*During which CARACTACUS, EVELINA, and ELIDURUS
are led off by ROMANS.*

4 AP 54

THE END.

